

Rebates

Manufacturer's rebates are offered for everyday purchases like toothpaste and shampoo, as well as large ticket items like furnaces or a new car. There are even rebate programs for socks, diapers and motor oil.

Rebating is a popular budget-saving technique when used properly. Some manufacturers offer a specific cash refund, coupons or a free product. The Bureau of Consumer Protection has received many consumer complaints involving rebates. Here are some tips to help with the rebate process:

- Read the rebate form carefully before making the purchase so you are familiar with any special requirements, such as the need for cash register receipts, labels, uniform product codes, etc.
- Pay close attention to rebate expiration dates, proof-of-purchase requirements and any restrictions. Often, only one rebate is allowed per household or address.
- Print information clearly and completely on rebate forms.
- Often each rebate request must be sent in a separate envelope.
- The rebate offer may only be appropriate for a purchase made during a specific time period. The toothpaste you bought last month may not meet the time requirements, even if it's the same brand.
- Follow mailing instructions carefully. Clearinghouses handle most refunds, not the manufacturer.
- Keep your own records. Write down the name and address of the rebate offer, date mailed and the amount of rebate expected. If possible, keep an extra copy of the rebate form and the material sent with it. This information will be helpful in case of a problem or dispute.
- If you have problems receiving the rebate, write to the manufacturer of the product. Post office box numbers for rebate offers are usually closed when the rebate expires, so they're of little help. The manufacturer's address can usually be found on the product package.
- Rebates are provided after the purchase. You must pay taxes on the full purchase price of taxable items.

Finally, as you decide to purchase items because of rebates, or if you spend a great amount of time completing rebate forms and sending them in, decide if you really need the product and if purchasing it over one without a rebate is worth all the effort.

For more information or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

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